

3/5/2015 Testimony of Stacey Zimmerman SEIU CT State Council

Support

SB 858 AN ACT CONCERNING EMPLOYEES WHO CUSTOMARILY AND REGULARLY RECEIVE GRATUITIES AND THE MINIMUM FAIR WAGE

Chairman Tercyak and Gomes distinguished members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify here today. My name is Stacey Zimmerman; I am here today representing the Service Employees International Union Connecticut State Council the state's largest labor union with over 65,000 members.

SEIU strongly supports SB 858 AN ACT CONCERNING EMPLOYEES WHO CUSTOMARILY AND REGULARLY RECEIVE GRATUITIES AND THE MINIMUM FAIR WAGE. It is time to end the sub minimum wage that relies on patron generosity and owner honesty to make the state minimum wage. It is true that in some cases the worker can exceed the minimum wage and these examples are highlighted by opponents of this legislation every chance that is given.

What is not spoken about is that the median annual wage for Connecticut waitstaff was \$19,206; for bartenders, it was \$19,065. Hardly the extravagant wages glorified by industry associations and management. To make matters worse it is becoming common practice to deduct credit card fees from the tips therefore lowering wages even more.

Employers are required to "top-off" a tipped worker's pay when it falls short of the minimum wage, the complicated system enables employers to routinely violate wage and hour laws with minimal repercussion. From 2010-2012 the Wage and Hour Division of the US Dep't of Labor conducted nearly 9K investigations in full service restaurants and found an 84% non-compliance rate.

This system needs to end and front staff as we called them when I worked in a restaurant kitchen need to be seen as the whole employees of the establishment they are. The wages the workers rely on should and must be provided by the employer not hoped to be provided by the customers.